

# N.Y. Today: A Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree With Bronx Roots; New York Today

The New York Times

November 28, 2018 Wednesday 10:51 EST

Copyright 2018 The New York Times Company All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NYREGION; newyorktoday

**Length:** 1351 words

**Byline:** Azi Paybarah

**Highlight:** Sometimes the big tree has humble beginnings. Also, the push to legalize e-bikes, and Sandra Lee's smoothie recipe.

## Body

---

(Want to get New York Today by email? Here's the sign-up.)

It's Wednesday. Governor Cuomo is scheduled to have lunch with President Trump to discuss the Gateway rail tunnel project. It's not yet known what is on the menu.

Weather: Mostly cloudy with a high of 45 but winds that will make it feel like the 20s or 30s. Tomorrow and Friday, expect sunnier skies.

Alternate-side parking: in effect until Dec. 8

1. This year's Rockefeller Center tree is from a woman who grew up treeless

Sometimes the big Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center has humble beginnings.

Shirley Figueroa, a retired public servant, grew up in Mott Haven in the Bronx with "no trees on my block."

But last year, Ms. Figueroa, 49, and her wife bought a home in Wallkill, N.Y., an hour and a half north of the city.

The home came with a towering Norway spruce that a Rockefeller Center scout had already spotted. (Every year, the center gets its tree from a different place. Last year's came from someone's yard in State College, Pa.)

And so Ms. Figueroa's 72-foot tree will be lit tonight in a ceremony that starts at 7 o'clock.

"Just the fact that I have a tree that I can donate when I came from somewhere that had no trees — it's so surreal," Ms. Figueroa said.

Also noteworthy: This is the first tree in Rockefeller Center's history to be donated by a same-sex or Latina couple, a Rockefeller Center spokeswoman said. Ms. Figueroa and her wife are Puerto Rican.

"That's cool," Ms. Figueroa said about her history-making status. "We're happy all around. We're New Yorkers."

2. Visiting New York City's early AIDS graves

The Times's Corey Kilgannon reports:

## N.Y. Today: A Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree With Bronx Roots New York Today

On Tuesday, the City Council speaker, Corey Johnson, took a tour of Hart Island, off the coast of the Bronx, where the city buries its unclaimed dead.

He asked to be taken to a remote spot on the island's southernmost tip where in 1985 the city buried some of the earliest casualties of AIDS in an effort to quarantine them.

The graves were in an overgrown area and some of the headstones were toppled over, said Mr. Johnson, who is the city's first openly gay male speaker and is H.I.V. positive.

"I was sort of taken aback that that area felt sort of neglected," he said.

Mr. Johnson said the visit strengthened his support for transferring the jurisdiction of the island from the Department of Corrections to the Parks Department.

He added, "I knelt down in front of one of the markers and closed my eyes for a minute and thought of all the gay men who lost their lives."

### 3. Push to legalize e-bikes sets up City Hall brawl

New: A pair of bills will be introduced at the City Council meeting this afternoon that would open the door to widespread use of e-scooters and e-bikes on city streets, The Times's J. David Goodman reports.

Mayor Bill de Blasio has previously said electric bikes are a "real danger."

Context: E-bikes, "the scourge of many New York residents," Mr. Goodman writes, are "also a staple of the food-delivery workers who serve them."

### 4. Central Park, reimagined

The University of Pennsylvania School of Design recently announced five winners of its competition to redesign Central Park after the hypothetical scenario of an eco-terrorist attack.

Pictured above is one of the winning entries, from the designers John Beckmann, Hannah LaSota and Laetitia Hervy, of the New York-based firm Axis Mundi Design.

The entry shows how a "ravaged original surface of Central Park is left as a regenerating wilderness," with "a green mega-structure" or "raised parkland," they said.

See more from them and other winning designs.

### 5. Best of The Times

Public advocate's race: The newly announced candidate Melissa Mark-Viverito, the former City Council speaker, says she would use the office to "stand up for constituents who feel government is letting them down."

Mathlete: On the court, the Brooklyn Nets' second-year center Jarrett Allen hopes to lead his team in a new direction. Off the court, he's trying get students to be inspired by math and science.

El Chapo trial: The drug lord's spoils include a beach house, a zoo and a fleet of cash-filled jets.

R.I.P. Harold Levy: He was the city schools chancellor from 2000 to 2002 and attracted thousands of new teachers by insisting on higher starting wages. He was 65.

48 cool kids: The Times Magazine sent a photographer to look for the city's most fashionable kids.

Not Flushing: A new destination for Chinese food is Forest Hills, Queens, better known for delis and pizza parlors.

### 6. What we're reading

## N.Y. Today: A Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree With Bronx Roots New York Today

Marshal money: A city official made \$1.7 million last year working for predatory lenders. [Bloomberg]

Inmate's death examined: A "guard's stubborn insistence that even a mentally ill inmate must clean his cell" eventually led to the death of an inmate inside a New York maximum-security prison. [The Atlantic]

Court ruling: The state's highest court "ruled that immigrants are entitled to a jury trial, even when they're accused of misdemeanor crimes that carry sentences of six months or less. The court ruled that the penalty of deportation was severe enough to warrant a jury trial." [WNYC]

Good news about local news: The City, a local news start-up funded, in part, by the Craigslist founder Craig Newmark, hired its first reporter, Christine Chung, previously of Newsday.

7. Stat of the day: 10,561

That's how many pedestrians were injured in New York City car crashes in 2017, The Times's Winnie Hu reports. The number of pedestrians injured in cycling crashes: 315.

8. Coming up today

International experts gather at the New School to discuss the war on drugs and approaches to reform. 4 p.m. [Free]

The celebrated painter Kehinde Wiley is the inspiration for an art class at the Gertrude Ederle Recreation Center on West 60th Street. 6 p.m. [Free]

Head to Queensborough Community College for a course on the 20th century revival of Hebrew and the efforts to revitalize indigenous languages. 12:10 p.m. [Free]

A discussion on public health and inequality at the Museum of the City of New York. Free flu shots will be available. [Free]

Craving Brooklyn nostalgia? The photographer Larry Racioppo discusses his new book documenting the borough in the 70s and 80s at the Brooklyn Historical Society. 6:30 p.m. [\$10]

For more events, check the going-out guides from The Times's culture pages.

— Iman Stevenson

9. Metropolitan Diary: Hola, J. Alfred

Dear Diary:

Are your bunions as big as Bermuda, Are your bones like vanilla biscotti? Do you know this intrepid intruder, Who's invaded your mind and your body?

Brand-new hips of the finest titanium, Now a wattle in lieu of a neck, As for what's going on in your cranium, Well, you've lost a few jacks from the deck.

And Aleve is your go-to elixir, Any ache, every pain goes away. Metamucil and water's your mixer, Robitussin's your new cabernet.

Your theatrical dreams have lain fallow, That novel's somewhere in a fog. Oh, youth, it was fast, it was callow, And you doubt if you'll ever see Prague.

But don't roll your trousers and wonder, "Do I dare, do I dare, eat a peach?" But continue to struggle and blunder, Keeping splendid revisions in reach.

— Lou Craft

## 10. And Finally: The governor's girlfriend's smoothie

This smoothie recipe is from the Food Network star Sandra Lee, who is the longtime partner of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

She shared it with The Times's Jesse McKinley, who profiled Ms. Lee recently. We transcribe it below.

### Ingredients:

1 cup of spinach  
1 cup mint leaves  
1 packet frozen acai  
1 banana  
1/2 cup peaches  
2 tablespoons hemp seeds  
2 tablespoons chia seeds  
2 tablespoons of flaxseed  
almond milk — original — to desired consistency  
1/2 cup strawberries  
1/2 cup granola  
1/2 cup of broccoli

The recipe makes two servings, so make this Wednesday twice as good.

New York Today is published weekdays at 6 a.m. Sign up here to get it by email. You can also find it at [nytoday.com](http://nytoday.com).

We're experimenting with the format of New York Today. What would you like to see more (or less) of? Post a comment or email us: [nytoday@nytimes.com](mailto:nytoday@nytimes.com).

PHOTO: Shirley Figueroa, center, and her wife, Lissette Gutierrez, left, supplied this year's Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Diane Bondareff/Associated Press FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Document-Type:** briefing

**Publication-Type:** Web Blog

**Subject:** CHRISTMAS (90%); CITIES (89%); CITY GOVERNMENT (89%); ELECTRIC MOBILITY (89%); LGBTQ+ PERSONS (89%); REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); TALKS &

N.Y. Today: A Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree With Bronx Roots New York Today

MEETINGS (78%); AIDS & HIV (70%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (69%); ISLANDS & REEFS (66%);  
CORRECTIONS (50%); New York City (%); Rockefeller Center (Manhattan, NY) (%); Christmas Trees (%);  
Bicycles and Bicycling (%); Lee, Sandra (%); Mott Haven (Bronx, NY) (%); New York Today (%)

**Industry:** ELECTRIC MOBILITY (89%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (69%); CEMETERIES (67%)

**Person:** Lee, Sandra

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, NY, USA (95%); NEW YORK, USA (96%); PENNSYLVANIA, USA (79%)

**Load-Date:** November 29, 2018

---

End of Document